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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Letter dated 22 November 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I should like to draw your attention to the fact that certain circles have for more than one year been making accusations against Iraq on the grounds that the new irrigation projects being executed in the marsh region of southern Iraq may have an adverse effect on the environment and on the nature and way of life of the population there, and thus, by extension, on human rights. Unfortunately, these accusations were seized upon by Mr. Max van der Stoel, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iraq, and included in his report submitted to the Third Committee of the General Assembly on 8 November 1994 (A/49/651).

These accusations are not inconsistent with the general tenor of the malicious campaign being waged by some circles against Iraq. What causes surprise and objection, however, is that this campaign has taken certain Iraqi economic development projects as a pretext for raising the subject of human rights. It has also ignored the fact that the economic development project targeted for attack is an old project proposed and designed back in 1952 by United States and European consultancy firms with a view to promoting development in the lower marsh region of the Tigris and Euphrates for agricultural purposes. The initial phases of this project were begun at the end of the 1950s, and the work of execution was continued by the Ministry of Irrigation in collaboration with Soviet, German and Brazilian firms during the 1970s and 1980s. At the beginning of the 1990s, execution was halted by reason of the economic embargo against Iraq. For the selfsame reason, the Iraqi Government found that there was an urgent need to complete the execution of the project, drawing exclusively on Iraqi resources, and thereby make it possible to

drain the salt water and provide increased land for cultivation, enabling agriculture to do its share in reducing the impact of the food embargo on the Iraqi people.

In order to clarify the facts, supported by the documents on this project, I enclose a study on the background to the project and on the firms that participated in the execution, together with annexes containing reports of the firms, including United States firms, which had worked on the project since 1952.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and the annexed study entitled "Ahdaf tahdhib majari al-anhar wa istighlal mawarid al-miyah fi janub al-Iraq" ("Objectives of the rechannelling of the watercourses and exploitation of the water resources in southern Iraq"), and its annexes,* as documents of the General Assembly under agenda item 100 (c).

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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* The study and annexes are available for consultation in room S-2914.